

Peking's Drive to Curb Use Of Money Stuns East Europe

By Flora Lewis

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The writer of the following article, Flora Lewis, is an American journalist of long experience in the Communist countries of Eastern Europe and the author of "A Case History of Utopia," the story of Poland's 1956 "October Revolution."

BONN—The transformation of Communist China's country side into a number of vastly regimented communes has stunned Communists throughout Eastern Europe. As details of the commune system begin to filter out of China, even the most orthodox Marxists—those who had been rigidly opposed to relaxations in their own countries—appear to be terrified at the implication of the Chinese experiment. Quite possibly, there are those in the Soviet hierarchy who feel the same way, but they have not seen fit to weep on Western shoulders as yet.

What concerns these Communist leaders most is not the extent of the regimentation of the Chinese peasants and workers, the totalitarianization, the destruction of the family unit. It is the gradual suppression of the use of money.

Get Only Pocket Money

In the most advanced communes, the people receive only a small amount of pocket money. As private plots of land are bought up, payment is partly in coupons, which can

be used for the communal without money, meant to provide restaurants, buses, shops,duce a society without greed clothing stores, and so forth, and its attendant evils, is in In some countries except Marxist theory the final, most money wages a gradually are exalted stage of communism, still being paid, but in account. But for more than 20 years is small, and the case is being now the Soviet Union has tube to gradually about the been drawing away from that of money as part of all goal. Although it was expressed financial resources, the in practical troubles with pro hands of the coming to the production the essential reason for projects of nationalization was that money is the easiest character."

More and more the needs of the peasants and workers—even funerals—are being paid off by the state.

Whether the plan will work is another matter. The Soviet Union, after far less democratic experiments than China has announced, found it necessary to fall back on money incentives.

Difficult to Grasp

But the plan, if it were successfully completed, would mean such profound change in the whole modern concept of life that it is difficult for Western minds to grasp. "We find it difficult to imagine a society without a medium of exchange for the daily needs. What it would mean in terms of ordinary life is the almost total suppression of choice—not just choice of a political party in elections, nor choice of jobs, nor choice of where to live, but virtually all choice, from the trivial to the most urgent.

Soviet citizens, who are not afraid China will fail in reaching the "pure" Marxist goal, what worries them is whether to spend one bottle of vodka or say 40 or a new pair of shoes.

The utopian goal is a society all saved.

Incident Reported

An incident reported by some Eastern European Communists who were in Peking early this year illustrates why China's new experiment disturbs them so much. They were speaking with Mao Tse-tung about the difficulties of raising the standard of living in their own country.

Mao brushed aside the whole subject with disdain, and told them, "Why do you worry about the standard of living? It can only go down. In a few thousand years, there will be two billion in China and your country will have at least 10 times its present population. You'll have to have passes rationing the right to go out on the street for a breath of air. Forget the standard of living. Teach the people music."

The European Communists aren't afraid China will fail in reaching the "pure" Marxist goal. What worries them is whether to spend one bottle of vodka or say 40 or a new pair of shoes.